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CURRENT OPINION

Human Progress

The constructive optimism of modern science appears clearly in an article from the pen of Professor T. D. A. Cockerell in the July number of the *Scientific Monthly*. He says:

When we regard vast periods of time, evolutionary progress can be readily appreciated; change seems to be the rule. Morphological, physiological, and psychological characters have all gone into the melting-pot to emerge in new forms and phases. Progress and life appear to be almost synonymous. Yet we find on investigation that the tissues out of which living things are made are extraordinarily permanent. So also are the determiners, the units of inheritance.

Protoplasm, which is basic to all life and change, is one of the most permanent substances in the world. Species too are essentially static. As species they know nothing of progress. Man, in a wild state, remains the same for ages as have the wild forest tribes of the remote regions of the Amazon. The "go" of life is individual, not specific. The interesting thing is, however, that "the species *Homo Sapiens* has taken on the dynamic features of the individual—has almost become a vast and long-lived individual." Human progress was sweeping forward on this amazing adventure before man came to a realization of what was happening.

Man was conscious of change, but felt that Eden, from which he had fallen, was a place of changeless bliss "untroubled by reformers." Sin made a return to the old state of affairs for the race forever impossible, but worthy individuals might pass after death once more into the old static monotony and uniformity. With the rebirth of science and the new knowledge it began to be apparent that man had not merely lost his way; he was going somewhere. In the light of this vision men no

longer sought to find a way of escape from the consequences of the first sin nor merely to secure remedies for existing evils, but joyfully took up the task of raising the species to higher and nobler life.

To be sure, progress has been uneven. All phases of the life of the race have not been equally eager and responsive.

The modern reformer, the modern progressive, is like a man in a chariot pulled by many horses. He cannot stop—he does not wish to—all he can do is to attempt to control the animals. This one must be held in, this encouraged by the whip, this held to the road lest it upset the vehicle. He no longer says, with the philosophers of a mechanistic school, "Let them go, they will go when they must." He feels more and more his responsibility and the need for controlling the processes which he cannot and usually would not stop. For his guidance he appeals on the one hand to science, to the facts with which he has to deal—the structure of the vehicle and the nature of the beasts—on the other to his idealism, his innate feeling concerning the nature and proper destiny of man. He may make mistakes, but he knows that damnation equally with salvation lies on the road before him and that he and he alone can determine which it shall be for him and his. Yet he feels that he is not alone in a deeper sense; he prays to his God, confident that there is something in the very structure of the universe which will uphold his arms. Where is he going? Is there some haven of realized ideals, some ultimate goal of social stability and perfection? He does not know, but the wind blows in his face and the dawn of a new day lights the eastern sky.

The Future of Religion

Will religion revive after the war? Answering this question in the *New Republic* of June 9, Dr. Kirsopp Lake confesses to an optimistic bias so far as religion is concerned, but is decidedly pessimistic about the present attitude and future fate of the churches. "The thing which young men

and women are seeing very clearly is that life is dominated by a great purpose. The fulness of it is not clear, nor do we always see it: but we know perhaps better than we can express its general character and the direction in which it leads, so that the venture of faith consists in subordinating our own wills to this great purpose." Dr. Lake believes this to be religion and that it has been produced, not by the war, though the war may have quickened it in some minds, but by the call of modern life in general.

The serious thing is that there is no hope that this religious power will lead to a strengthening of organized religion and of the Christian churches. The church leaders do not recognize this popular attitude of mind toward the driving world-purpose as religion. Religion in the thought of churchmen means conscious loyalty to a personal God which to modern youth seems to mean "loyalty to a God outside the universe which he created, playing tricks with it in alternating moments of superhuman love and infra-human wrath." The modern mind also finds it difficult to think of God as a personality akin to anthropomorphic individuality; he must think of reality as immaterial, and in this he is more akin to Athanasius than to the ordinary preacher of today. The laws of this immaterial reality he feels he must obey and eagerly desires to live in right relations with it. He feels that he must reject as well the old idea of religion as an extra tacked on to life and controlled by a select society; religion, for him, is rather a part of ordinary living in this human world. God is not static, but the purpose immanent in the dynamic and changing nature of reality. All this mental make-up of the modern youth is religious, but the ordinary religious speaker regards it as heretical and the ordinary scientific mind accepts the verdict and agrees to regard himself in that light. Ecclesiastical orthodoxy will, in all probability, refuse the name of religion to this modern devotion to

the purposive principle of existence and reserve that name for obsolete theories invented in past generations and now intellectually indefensible. "For, sad to say, if in the language of St. Luke we ask, 'If the Son of Man come will he find faith on the earth?' we are forced to admit that faith is to be found almost anywhere except in the leaders of the churches."

The modern business man and the modern man of science are, each in his own realm, by faith, pushing forward to the better future, trusting to the guidance of life. "But the professional ecclesiastic has insisted on keeping his talent unchanged, removed from the commerce of the market, and the time is approaching when it will be taken from him and be given to others: he himself will retain merely the hole in the ground where he hid it. He may continue to call that hole religion, or God, or Christianity . . . but the reality will be elsewhere, even if it be under another name, and the children of the new age will follow the reality not the name."

The Rights of Man

The entrance of the United States into the world-war moves M. J. Emile Roberly in *Le Semeur* for May to point out the close religious relationship of France, England, and America in their struggle for individual and political liberty. His thesis is that the idea of establishing the rights of the individual by law was religious and not political in origin; that it dates back to the French Reformation, to Calvin and Beza; and, developed by Puritans in England and America, came back after two centuries to take its place in the French Declaration of 1789.

The rights of man and of the citizen were forced as a problem upon the Calvinistic theologians of the sixteenth century by the pressure of the opposition which the reformation met from the French and Spanish monarchies. The Huguenot leaders, who felt free to investigate the divine origin of

the authority of the church, were moved after the experience of St. Bartholomew to examine also the divine origin of the royal power. In 1573 Beza said with startling boldness: "All resistance of subject against his superiors is not illegal and seditious. States, that is, the representatives of the nations, are above kings. The people are older than their rulers and consequently the people have not been created for the rulers but the rulers for the people." But the religious idea of the rights of man was driven from France and found a refuge among the Puritans of Scotland, England, and America. In England the Puritans under Cromwell organized their churches in a purely democratic way, establishing them on the basis of an agreement entered into by all members of the community. As the "Independents" in politics these men tried to secure a written constitution for the state as a social contract to replace the old idea of divine right. The final result was a Declaration of Rights: "We declare," they say, "with one accord that these are our natural rights and that we are resolved to maintain them against all opposition of whatever nature." When the little group of English Puritans—the Pilgrim Fathers—set out to found on the other side of the Atlantic a new colony where they might live according to their religious and political ideal, it was this type of constitution which they committed to writing on board the "Mayflower" on the eleventh of November, 1620. This Bill of Rights of the Pilgrim Fathers served as the model of all the American state constitutions. In 1789 Lafayette proposed to add to the French constitution a "Declaration of Rights" modeled on the bills of rights of the American states. These rights are not considered as instituted by law in the form of a government concession, as Rousseau seems to urge in his *Social Contract*; they belong to the human person by the gift of God. The rights of man are anterior and

superior to church and state. It is this religious idea of right, which, from the American constitutions, themselves Puritan and Calvinistic in origin, at length entered into the Declaration of the French Revolution. The democracy of the United States is then religiously and politically of Calvinistic origin. It is well to recall to mind these things when America is about to spill her blood for the same cause—the rights of man, the rights of all the nations.

Our Gospel Today

God at times seems so cruel, man so vengeful, society so corrupt. It is no easy task to maintain an unalterable faith in the Father God and brother man and a redeemed social order. Yet Paul B. Rupp in the *Reformed Church Review* for last quarter keeps his faith and finds a gospel for today. A superficial judgment, he thinks, would declare the world morally bankrupt. Abroad is a world-war; at home are social, political, and religious defeat and discouragement. Our domestic life shows so much of injustice, greed, incompetence, and enervation. But despair is not yet, for the war has shown in the race a spirit of splendid self-sacrifice, and in America, lit from that bright flame, has sprung up a new idealism, which, however, is not on friendly terms with the church. Scientific, economic, and religious factors enter into this indifference or antagonism. "Repelled by the mediaeval terminology and concepts of the conservative or annoyed by the compromising attitude of the mediationist and as yet unaware that there is a place for the scientific spirit in religion, they seek elsewhere than in the church for the means by which human life may be transformed and exalted. The church is not in good odor with certain scientists and socialists who believe that the ethics of Jesus is broader than any creed and that the moral life is infinitely more valuable than metaphysical dogma or apostolic succession."

What then is the gospel for this world on the verge of bankruptcy? The interpretation of the professional evangelist who stresses deliverance from hell and of the legalistic churchman who preaches the God of absolute will are both dismissed as hopeless. The gospel must be the very message which Jesus himself proclaimed to the world—the good news of a God of perfect and holy love, of men as God's children in a great family, and of the Kingdom of God which we may help to create. This Kingdom of God is composed of people who are God-intoxicated and man-serving. They are centers of divine influence which penetrates every nook and corner of a diseased social order; they are nuclei of processes which will find their completion in a new world of peace and good will. The salvability of the whole world is the conviction of the awakened church of the twentieth century. Even as Jesus in the first century so the preacher of today must proclaim the gospel of God's infinite goodness, man's incalculable worth, and the salvability of society.

The Clearing Aim of the War

Writing in the *Atlantic Monthly* for July the brilliant editor of the *Hibbert Journal*, Mr. L. P. Jacks, traces the gradual clarification of thought with regard to the aim of the war. The cause for which the Allies were fighting was clear from the beginning, but the question as to what would be the outcome of victory led to a chaos of unsolved problems. Mr. Jacks found the solution in two recent events—the democratization of Russia and the entrance of the United States, the world's greatest democracy, into the war.

The interpretation of the early phases of the struggle was given by Mr. Asquith in the words: "We are fighting for Public Right." Reduced to plain language "public right" as a rule of international polity is the rule that each nation, big or little, is to mind

its own business and leave other nations, big and little, to mind theirs. Yet this very principle would be considered ridiculous if individuals in a nation were to claim such freedom to govern their own lives regardless of state authority. When Germany, believing herself to be the most enlightened nation, claims the right to impose her culture on nations less enlightened than herself, how, after all, does her conduct differ in principle from that which we all acclaim in domestic government when we say that the ignorant must submit to the control of the wise, the evil give way before the good, and the expert rule the incompetent? Furthermore, the freedom of each nation to mind its own affairs is not accorded by any protagonist of the Allies to the Turks. Mr. Balfour proposes their expulsion from Europe. So the idea of "public right" ends in inconsistency and a confusion of unsolved problems.

Moreover, the proposed federation of all nations for the purpose of defending their mutual rights might end in a clique of nations or even in a league of objectionable nations. Still the advocates of "public right" strove to be consistent. They would apply to interstate relations the very principle of government which has been almost universally adopted in domestic legislation. The community of states was to be democratized, organized, and governed by an authority of its own creating; thus would come into being a new world-dominion but at the same time a world-democracy based on the consent of the governed.

The one great stumbling-block to this scheme was that it required that all nations who were parties to it should be free nations and enter freely into the concert. On the one hand was problematic Russia, apparently the worst military despotism the world has ever seen. On the other hand was the uncertainty—would the United States be sympathetic? One thing was certain, tyrants could never be admitted to such a

league of peace, for the "presence of one powerful member in a group of nations, whose action was subject to the will of a despot, would inevitably wreck the working of any scheme which had the world's peace or order for its ultimate object." In the midst of these uncertainties and problems there came at last light and clear vision. Since Russia has swung into line with the democracies and the United States has entered the war, it is brilliantly clear that for the future peace of the world the aim of the war at last becomes the elimination of the remaining despotisms of Europe. Peace lives in the hearts of the peoples, and when the people rule will require no man to enforce it. The present war is a fighting over again of the French Revolution, not on the scale of one nation nor of several nations, but on the scale of all nations. It is the final struggle to rid the world of the curse of despotism. The war was made by despots and by the war despotism is finally to be undone. No peace can be made now or at any future time to which despots are a party without a total surrender of the cause of liberty. Consequently the aim of the war may be stated without hesitation—it is to prepare the world for the coming federation of free peoples by the elimination of the last relics of despotism.

With an intense pathos Mr. Jacks pauses a moment to contemplate the possible failure of the Allies. In the *Hibbert Journal* for April he sets forth more fully the hopeless mental attitude of such a beaten world. "If that happens we are undone. Good-bye then to all our dreams of a reconstructed world! It is not merely that the victors would make short work of our programmes; it is not merely that we should lack the material resources to carry them out; we should have neither the hope, the confidence, the faith nor the energy to enter upon any such enterprises. All the free nations of the earth would be heart-broken."

Can Man Abolish War?

In the *North American Review* for June Harold Begbie offers a reply to the foregoing question. Two ways have been recommended to mankind for securing the peace of the world: one is arbitration; the other, international federation. It would matter little what the machinery were if the nation brought into the controversy the moral quality of good will. Without this spirit of good will, Mr. Begbie thinks, no machinery of any kind can be rationally regarded as a sufficient insurance against war.

In 1907 the nations of Europe, at the second Hague Conference, solemnly promised to co-operate in the maintenance of general peace. Seven years later the compact was ruthlessly ground into the blood-stained mire of the battlefields of the most terrible of all the wars of the world. Not only the promise to arbitrate disputes, but pledges to mitigate the cruelties of war were thrown to the winds. So long as there are autocratic rulers, suspicious statesmen, and secret diplomacy, so long as the fates of peoples are decided over their heads, arbitration is a broken reed on which to depend for the peace of the world.

The proposal made by President Wilson of compulsory arbitration, by which an incensed state would be forced by the military power of other states to seek the decision of an international court in all disputes, Mr. Begbie thinks, offers a more secure foundation. But it means too that wars in the future would be prevented by war; it means that the satisfied states, that is, the states which have a large enough place in the sun, will be envied and hated by the younger, growing nations; it means that the same mind that produced this war will exist in perpetuity. The objections which may be raised against this international police force are staggering. It seems obvious that unless such a league of nations were formed out of a perfectly

satisfied world its existence would be a veritable seed-plot for conspiracy, a veritable hotbed for war.

The fact is evident today that many of the world-nations are not satisfied. Would the league of nations be prepared to hold down, by force, Germany, Austria, Turkey, and Bulgaria for an indefinite time? No man who believes in the religious progress of humanity can for a moment think of forcibly enfeebling and crushing these peoples. That would be to make a "scrap of paper" of the gospel of Christ. Force Germany and Austria into a league of nations with the brand of slavery upon their brow, will they then eagerly co-operate in the great work of world-civilization? It seems clear that if a federation is to be formed it is above all necessary that good will should inspire the whole body of nations forming the league. International federation is manifestly the great political ideal which presents itself to good men in every country under the sun. If there could be in the world an international court of justice to which every dispute between federated nations would be referred, and if behind this international court of justice there could be the force of the federated nations to see that its judgments were honored, then we might hope for world-peace.

Still Mr. Begbie thinks that even the peace of the world might be for Great Britain too dearly bought by the loss of control over her own British destiny. Professor Ramsay Muir asks, "Who can think of England allowing an international court of justice to decide for her whether India should be left to a bloody contest between Musselmans and Hindus and whether the stupendous work in Egypt should be exposed to the destruction of desert tribes?" And if England would not easily submit to such jurisdiction, how can we expect submission from those more arrogant nations in whose blood is the pride of the sword and in whose history is no long tradition of law? There seems to be some indestructible force in nationalism which insists on making its own way across the centuries without interference from others. Yet it is through this very pressure of nationalism that the world is most likely to reach the ideal goal of international federation; but no international machinery can guarantee a true and lasting peace until the spirit which animates the relations of states is definitely the spirit of good will. How this is to be attained Mr. Begbie does not say, but nevertheless, with subdued optimism, preaches the age-old gospel that there shall be "on earth, to men of good will, peace."